

Eckhart Tolle - Breath, Awareness, Politics, Children

[Speaker 1] (1:23 - 1:56:14)

Still here. I've never had so many questions at a retreat. And I'm not here to flatter you.

The best question, of course, is no question. But I have never had as many good questions, so it's difficult. They all are, most of them are good questions, direct, alive, live questions.

I've never thrown away any questions yet. I keep even the silliest question. Might come in useful at some point.

I will dip my hand in the basket in a second. One question that came three or four times. There are a few recurring questions.

Can we sit with you in silence for a while? Yes. You're not dependent on external stillness, of course.

When you're just listening, there's stillness inside you. No commentary. So don't miss the stillness that's actually there even when the words are spoken here, both in you and in the speaker.

There's no thinking in between sentences or words. So whenever a word has been uttered, the stillness is there again. Who is speaking?

Not this person or this little mind. Stillness is speaking. It's not personal.

Not my stillness or your stillness. And as I said before, this person is listening the same as you to the words. This person doesn't know what word is going to be spoken next, as little as you know what word is going to be spoken next.

It's not prepared. To trust in life enough for this to happen. To trust in life means to trust in this moment, the power of this moment, that whatever this moment requires will be there.

There were also two or three questions by people to whom the stillness is yet only a mental concept. And so they ask, it's great to hear about it, but I've never experienced the stopping of my mind. My mind is continuously noisy, compulsive.

It continuously worries and thinks. So what can you tell me, they ask. There are also a few questions on meditation, the use, the purpose, usefulness, or otherwise of meditation.

And I'd like to bring the two together, the two questions. Especially if the mind is incessantly active, even here, as you sit here. If you cannot notice the gaps, if you

cannot be attentive to the gaps, now make sure that this is actually the truth.

Because you may actually notice the gaps for a moment. There may be a momentary cessation. But because you're so used to listening to your mind, the mind is saying, no, nothing is going on, I don't get it.

Maybe you do, briefly. However it may be, if your mind has such overpowering momentum, meditation is a wonderful thing. There is a meditation, there are different methods.

One could say, of course, that being in the body is a kind of meditation. Feeling the inner body, directing attention into the inner body is a kind of meditation. The way it's presented here is in a non-formal, formalized way.

I just feel that. And it may be that people whose mind is extremely, extremely active may need a somewhat more formal approach to being in the body. And so there's a beautiful meditation technique, vipassana, that directs your attention slowly and gradually into the body.

So that would be a good thing to take up the practice of that. There are also mantras. If used rightly, they should stop the mind and replace all the various mental activities with just that, the mantra.

And eventually, of course, the mantra needs to come to an end and then the stillness is there. Buddhism has designed for hopeless cases the counting meditation. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha. Not hopeless, no.

Ha, ha, ha, ha. Where you count mentally from one to ten and ten to one, or maybe you start at a hundred, I don't remember. But you just, you count backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards.

And then that gives your mind something to do. But at least it becomes more focused. And once the chaos of the mind has become a more focused kind of noise, it's easier eventually to drop it. Once the chaotic noise has become focused noise, you can more easily drop once the noise has become focused, then you could drop the chaos.

It's hard to drop the chaos except in great suffering. The aim of all meditation, of course, is presence. Eventually, any technique needs to be let go of.

If there's anybody here who feels angry at that statement, it's a good sign that it's time to let go. Because there's a new identification with form. My method that I'm so good at, that I've spent 20 years getting better at.

So Vipassanā is excellent. They claim, and it may well be true, whether they have some

sutras to prove it, but who knows how old they are, but it may well be true that Vipassanā is one of the original meditations taught by the Buddha. But it seems that the Buddha also taught another meditation that is breath awareness.

And that can be practiced not just as a meditation, when you sit in a particular way, but to be aware of your breathing is related already to being in the body, because the breath flows into the body. To notice your breath, to feel your in and out breath, is helpful. It does bring you into the now.

When you do it for any length of time, you soon encounter the threshold of boredom, because observing your breath is not interesting. And then if you stay with it, you will pass through the threshold of boredom, and then observing your breath is quite peaceful, the coming and going. And you notice great subtleties about your breath.

You notice, for example, that at the end of each out breath, there's a momentary cessation. In breath hasn't started yet. You're neither breathing in nor out.

And that's a point of great peace, if you can notice that. A very peaceful point. And also at the end of the in breath, there's a momentary cessation.

Before the out breath starts. You can watch that. Nature does it.

They say the whole universe breathes in and out. If that is true, it may well be, because it's as above, so below. They say the entire universe expands.

Maybe it does. And then comes together again into one. And then it happens again.

And the heart does that. And the seasons do that. This season is a kind of out breath.

Fall, autumn. Nature is breathing as it comes to the end of the out breath. And sometimes even when you get warm days in autumn, they are maybe the same temperature almost as summer, it has a different energy quality to it.

It is stiller. It's moving towards cessation. Nature has come to the end of the out breath.

Fall is the out breath. And the end of the out breath is the equivalent of death. And that's why the autumn days can be so peaceful.

Sometimes you can even sense the stillness in the air. Nature is ready to rest. So everywhere you really have the in and out breath.

Each time you breathe out, it's a little death. So you go into that death and realize when you reach the point of death, the end of the out breath, you haven't disappeared. It's the deepest peace there.

So that, now to come to another question. These just happen to be a few that I

remember. A few questions on how to bring awareness into the everyday world.

Some people say, when I'm out in nature, it's wonderful. There's stillness. When I'm sitting here in the group, it's wonderful.

Stillness arises. But the moment I go back into the city and my usual activities, it's gone. How to bring it into that?

And of course, when you're in nature, your mind is not being stimulated because you're not surrounded by mind-made things. When you're in the city, everything around you is made by the human mind and there's a collective energy field that is nervous mental activity. That's why cities are so noisy.

The inner noise becomes externalized and then manifests as machines and amplifiers, producing so-called music. Very hard to find a restaurant these days where you're not bombarded with noise. And when you say, would you mind turning it down a little?

I say, what's wrong with you? And then there's your workplace, probably dominated by nervous mental energy, like most workplaces are. Even places that could potentially be places of great peace and healing, they're very nervous.

Hospitals are very nervous. Schools are very nervous. They're getting more and more nervous.

School teacher, one of the most stressful of all jobs. Only 50 years ago, it was one of the most comfortable jobs. It was great.

So bring in little returns to presence into the noise as you go about your activities. How to do that? Just little things.

You can even make a list of three, four, five things that you can do each day, periodically, simply to bring some return to presence. You may put next to your computer a little card that says, can you feel your feet? Can you feel your hands?

Or you may put in the bathroom, if they let you in the office, take two or three conscious breaths. When the phone rings, don't jump to it. Let it ring twice and then answer it.

And during that time, don't be in an inner state of, okay, I'm just holding back before I answer it. But, no, give it, allow it to ring. It wants to ring.

That's what it's doing. So you actually watch or listen to the ringing. You allow it.

It goes, whatever sound it makes these days. And there you are. You look at the phone and you hear the sound.

You've created a spaciousness inside. And that which drove you deeper and deeper into

mind and into noise is reversed. Every time it rings, it becomes an instrument for some space, just a little bit of space, to rise inside you.

And nobody would even notice that it took two more rings before you answered it. If there are steps, you can walk up and down the steps consciously instead of making each step a means to an end. In other words, you're already where you want to be mentally.

You're being pulled by the next moment to the next thing. You take the opportunity to take one step at a time. You don't even have to slow down after a while.

You can actually walk fast without being pulled to where you need to get, without being pulled away from this moment. That's extremely enjoyable. It doesn't mean now as you bring presence into everyday life that you necessarily have to slow down.

At first, it may slow you down a little because it's an unusual way of doing things. But after a while, you realize that there's no need to slow down. If actually something needs to be done fast, you suddenly see your hands are moving fast.

You're putting this here, packing your suitcase to get to the airport, you're running late, and yet suddenly there's only each movement and looking what it is that needs to be put in without even noise, because there's only the looking now. There's an opening of a drawer. You see.

There's this right action that comes out of presence. You don't think, OK, what do I need? You can actually look, and it happens.

And then you walk fast, and you enjoy the energy of that. And then you shut it, and then you run down the stairs, still without being pulled, because if you're pulled away from the now into the future, that is the mental projection, so the mind projects itself there and says, I need to be there. And then you're being pulled out of yourself, and it's called stress.

And so you know when, but they also speak of stress in metal, which stress means there's one pull this way and one pull that way, and eventually it breaks. There's too much stress in metal. So humans live in continuous stress in this mad world, and stress is a form of fear.

I need to be there. So you bring in, first into little things, presence. There's the phone.

You could have a flower next to your computer screen. There's a flower. I always make sure there's a flower there, and something natural, because everything else, if you're in an office, is mind made.

There's a flower there, and periodically you look at it, truly look, just half a minute, a minute. The mind will tell you that you cannot spare 30 seconds to look at the flower.

You just don't have the time.

This cannot be true. Everybody has 30 seconds occasionally. If you can enter the body easily, feel that in your place of work, a great opportunity if you can do that.

It's the most wonderful transformation. Whenever somebody speaks to you on the phone or in person, while you listen to that person, feel the aliveness in the inner body. And now, what is speaking to you is the human mind.

It will try to get you entangled in what it's saying. But now you are rooted here. You listen from there.

And can you function in that way? Yes. Can you still reply intelligently, or are you just going to make unintelligible sounds?

No, you may be surprised that intelligible words come out of your mouth if you need to reply. They may be more intelligent than you would have said otherwise. Any time there's a meeting, dreadful things, meetings, committee meetings, conference tables, everybody has their agenda, everybody has their power positions, everybody's fighting everybody else, or two temporarily get together to fight those other two and all that madness.

Around the table, if there's only one human being who is in the body, it's often enough to change the entire energy field of the meeting. Even if it isn't, even if it doesn't do that, it gives you a degree of peace while you sit there. You will probably speak less, but when you speak, it is more likely that people will listen, because at last, somebody is saying something new and meaningful.

It does not come from ego. So in that sense, healing is taking place through you, through not the personal you, but through this form, healing is happening. So you're not doing it just for yourself, because if one person becomes transformed in that way and brings in a different vibration, vibrational energy field, then things will change around them, if they are capable of change.

Some structures are so heavy, old mind-made human structures, certain organizations. Some may be too heavy, they will just have to crumble eventually, and they will, sooner or later, probably sooner. Many other structures are still capable of change, because there are humans in there.

They're basically all mind structures. If you need to escape from the office, go to the bathroom, shut yourself in there, and sit there for two minutes, not complaining about the mad world, but perhaps being aware of your breathing. And this is another little one that you can introduce anywhere, being aware, watching the breath as you go up and down the elevator.

Wonderful. Who says that you cannot watch your breath when you're in the elevator, if that is at your workplace? And you yourself will come up with little things on how to introduce spaces into that which seems to make it impossible to have space, those surroundings.

And yet it's not impossible. I will dip my hand in the basket now. Ah, take a few.

There was a big one here. Maybe it works. Another big one got blown away by the wind.

Sometimes it doesn't. When I let go of my story, I feel less alive. What is the value of going to a place where I feel less alive?

It is true. Better than to be dead is to have a dramatic story. Better than not feel any aliveness is to have some drama, something interesting going on in your life.

And so you see often in relationships, the partners feel if they are not going through their periodic drama, they don't have a relationship anymore. It feels the aliveness is going out of it. But the story is a secondary kind of aliveness.

The drama that people get involved in, yes, it's a way of feeling some life in the absence of feeling something much deeper and more genuine. But you have to step out of the story temporarily to find that. And a good starting place is going into the body.

Not just for a minute, but make it into a daily practice for a while. And go deeply within and sense the enormous amount of vibrant life that is already there in the body. Bring attention to your sense perceptions and notice the enormous power of your conscious attention.

So it's a question of leaving your habitual world where you felt at home and entering something new. And at first the new you may not recognize. It happens also when people first encounter some stillness and it's such a strange place.

That they feel they want to run back to the mental noise and they say, well, I encountered some stillness but it felt completely empty and I don't see why I should go there. I compare these people to someone who just spent four hours in a noisy discotheque and then steps out and the heavy doors close behind and you're out in the countryside with only very subtle noises of the night going on and a breeze. But at first you step out, you hear nothing.

It will feel dreadful, that silence, because you're so used to that noise. So you might even in fear run back into the discotheque. At least that's familiar.

You have to stay for a while with the stillness because the power of that is more subtle, it's more powerful but also much more, it has a different density to it than the density of the mind, a different frequency. So you become attuned to that frequency. So you stay

in the emptiness for a while and then realize the emptiness is also fullness.

Now, the desire to step out of your story only comes really when the story becomes too unpleasant to want to dwell in it. So it may be that some people have to wait a little bit longer until their story turns into something that they don't want to be in anymore. And eventually that will happen.

There is greater aliveness, true aliveness, outside of the story. What determines the intensity of a person's wish to be in the present moment? What one could perceive as the wish to be in the present moment is the arising of presence in you.

In that sense, there's nothing you can do about it. When the wish appears, presence is already arising. It's not separate from it.

But can you make it arise? No. So what determines whether or not presence is arising in you?

We could say grace, evolution, how much you've suffered. Maybe they're all the same. In any case, it is not something that you can want to happen, and you wouldn't.

You wouldn't even want to be present if presence were not arising. You wouldn't even ask the question how to be more present. So it is arising.

The wish to be present is the arising of presence. It's ultimately not personal. And yet, from a personal perspective, where language comes from and where we have to speak from a lot of the time, we can say that you can help the arising of presence being receptive to it.

But it's all really something that the universe is doing through you. When you think you are doing it, and it's great to believe that I can choose to be present. I can choose not to answer this phone and let it ring twice.

That's what it looks like. But how is it possible for you to even do that if there were not enough presence? You couldn't know what you want to do.

You would say, what is the point in waiting? I mean, it's ringing, answer it! And maybe that's what your boss will say when he sees what you're answering.

Ultimately, it's not you, because you are not separate from the totality of the universe. It just seems that way. But it's good to feel that you can choose.

Ultimately, the universe is choosing to be present through you. Nobody else can choose. Well, there's an interesting question.

Maybe it's connected with this. You've given us many portals to the stillness within, but I find that in day-to-day life my mind is in 100% control and does not want to be free of

itself. How do we become aware when we don't want to?

When you don't want to, you don't want to. But there is something hidden in the question, which to me signifies that something in you does want to. Otherwise you would neither be sitting here nor be asking that question.

You'd be watching TV somewhere. I get discouraged when I think, well, Eckhart didn't awaken through the practice of presence. He awakened through a sudden act of grace that completely erased his mind's habit of resisting the present moment, and so did many other teachers I know of.

Presence was the result of your awakening, but it wasn't the method. Are you sure ordinary people can dissolve their ego through the practice of presence when that's not how you did it? Are you sure ordinary people can dissolve their ego through the practice of presence when that's not how you did it?

I worry that I'm trying to break down the boulder of my ego with a pocket knife when what I really need is a stick of dynamite. Sometimes it happens with a pocket knife, but this isn't a pocket knife. This here is a sword.

Now it may well be that even the sword is not enough, and it may be that you need a stick of dynamite in the form of some disaster, and if you need it, you'll get it. If you truly need it, life will provide. Life provides what you need, and then you will see the grace that is hidden there when it comes.

And another part of the question implied, is it something we can do or is it something that just happens to us? The doing and the happening are really one. When you think you're doing, it's also happening to you.

But it's good to feel that you're doing it. That's meant to be part of the happening. The mind can't figure that out because the mindset is either this or that.

The mind likes to separate. That's how the mind works. It cuts it into two.

It's this or that. How can it be both? But it is.

Something else that this touches on? A sudden liberation from being possessed by the mind or a gradual becoming free through, perhaps, some applied spiritual practice. What is true that ultimately spiritual practice or technique, let us say as such, I don't know of anybody who has become liberated by a technique.

But they may have become liberated when they dropped the technique. The technique may have had its place as a ladder that they then dropped or as a raft. Buddha uses the analogy of a raft crossing the river.

You use it to cross the river. When you've reached the other side, you do not continue to

carry it around with you, the raft. It remains my raft.

Not all teachers, not to all of them did it come all at once. Many, yes. For example, many of you know the teachings of Nisargadatta who wrote one of the greatest spiritual books.

Well, he didn't write it. He spoke it. I Am That.

And he was at a stall in Bombay selling handmade cigarettes. One would have thought this is not very good karma. You're making other people ill.

And he smoked quite heavily apparently. And he just visited a guru, a teacher who said, well, just remember that you are consciousness. Just be aware of the I Am in whatever you do.

Feel yourself as consciousness. Oh, okay. And then he went off back to his daily business and he applied.

Can we call that a technique? It's too simple to be called a technique. All he remembered is, I am consciousness.

And he felt attempted to feel the I, the deeper I that underlies all experiences, awareness itself. And a few years later, it had emerged fully. It didn't come all at once, but it didn't take very long.

And then suddenly he started speaking wisdom. A cigarette seller, almost illiterate, suddenly people would come and ask him questions and intensely alive and wise answers came out of his mouth. Something had come through the form and so the cigarette seller became Nisargadatta Maharaj.

In India they like giving people names. Maharaj means the great king, spiritually, of course. So this is one teacher to whom it came not suddenly, although it didn't take very long, but after a few years it became a continuous living presence.

His presence was continuous in him. Now as it is becoming a more widespread phenomenon and this is happening, many people experience at first as a lessening of suffering, a considerable lessening of suffering in their lives. They can breathe.

There's some space. There may still be drama occasionally but there's space also. To many people it is coming gradually and to others it is coming in an accelerated form.

In this culture these days it often happens through an illness, AIDS, cancer and I know quite a few to whom it came in that way and I could see and I told them you are on an accelerated course what otherwise probably would have taken much, much longer is happening now through your illness that is forcing you into presence. And others don't need an illness. It's happening.

I cannot tell you whether you are better off with an illness or without it. If you choose presence and this is only a limited perspective it's not the ultimate truth then it's less likely that you'll need to be hit over the head in order to crack the remaining shell. If you die to the past every moment and return to just the freshness of this don't carry personal past the past in relationships, the past that you have with people yesterday they said that or whatever meet a person as if for the first time look at them and be there as a presence not as a heavy personal past be the attention be the attention that is looking at them because that's what you are be the consciousness that flows through your eyes as you look at them and listen to them you are that the beautiful expression in the Course in Miracles that is used for the present moment it's the holy instant to realize the only place that is sacred in life is this moment if you only pay attention to it you notice the sacredness of whatever form it takes even if it looks horrible at first because what looks horrible at first will be some kind of death, some kind of breaking down and there also is sacredness we already pointed to that particularly there how can I get over or release the outrage I among others feel about the political situation in the United States Bush and his policies which led to the invasion of Iraq the dismantlement of the US social services and civil liberties should I really let go, release this outrage outrage I assume is a kind of anger there are many places where you can look in this world countries, places institutions, governments and you see varying degrees of human unconsciousness at work wherever you look you see the manifestation of human unconsciousness unconsciousness of course I'm not saying they are totally they are identified with the mind and the old patterns of the mind the collective ego and wherever you look still you see it because the change that is happening in humanity to a large extent is on the inner it only slowly reaches the outer levels where you can actually detect it it takes a while before it reaches an institution before it reaches a politician before it reaches somebody in a position of power but occasionally it already happens Russia had a relatively enlightened human being after having had succession of leaders who seemed you didn't even know whether they were alive or dead when you saw them when they were having their there was actually speculation there was is whoever Brezhnev or whoever the names were is he still alive or did they just put a puppet there and some others speculated that it was an actor acting because they didn't dare say that he had died so they gave an actor the role to play and this may have been true, we don't know and that's one form of unconsciousness and the entire structure of that regime started from an ideal the mind saw something beautiful we must have equality no personal possessions but nothing had changed in the human mind the structures were still in place so we got that instead and then suddenly there was Gorbachev who compared to the previous leaders was a Buddha in consciousness I remember once a remark he made on television when he was still president they asked there was a little scandal about some western spies and eastern spies had been thrown out of the country the usual thing and what about this scandal about the Russian spies and the Russian embassy and he said, well, as the wise man said this too will pass and it did however it is rare for this shift that is happening in human consciousness to reach the outer forms the institutions,

the political, the government the institutions whatever it may be the outer forms, business business is the way businesses are run companies in most cases they are dominated still by the old egoic consciousness and I have spoken to some people who work in corporations who say there is so much infighting and useless power struggles going on within the corporation it's a miracle that anything gets done at all and everybody lives in fear and they are not happy so wherever you look in the world you will find still on the surface of things varying degrees of unconsciousness and only occasionally something else comes through already here and there, it does even on television, sometimes you see it you see a conscious being speaking or a film that has a message pointing to conscious awareness or pointing to stillness, it happens maybe it happens more now it's always wonderful, I love it when I see a film that points to the truth and there are quite a few now, not the majority yet of course but there are so many things that you could feel angry about if you personalize human unconsciousness if you make it into an identity then you say, these dreadful bastards look what they are doing human unconsciousness Jesus saw it clearly when he said they know not what they do in other words, they are unconscious and so a country sometimes also can vary a country can be pulled into unconsciousness to some extent by an unconscious leader Germany is a best example of what happened there a country that compared to others on the planet was one of the most highly developed cultures scientifically, literature, culture philosophy, music, and all that to no avail, they dropped right down into unconsciousness but this wouldn't have happened if there had not been a strong, enormous amount of collective pain body still in the country and an enormous amount of collective ego despite the so-called cultural achievements so when you see it as unconsciousness you are less likely to feel angry about it because anger does not really fulfill a very useful purpose it doesn't really change things it contributes more you are being pulled into unconsciousness through anger you become unconscious yourself see it for what it is and then the next step is what can you do, you have to accept that this is so, which does not mean there is nothing you can do once you have accepted that there is still a considerable amount of unconsciousness here on the planet, wherever you see it wherever you feel it's mostly you feel called upon to do something in this or that area it could be the destruction of nature it could be the polluting of oceans and rivers it could be on the political scene American politics, other politics Middle East great focal point of unconsciousness just look at the situation there there is no stop no pause to the fighting between the two and they are both victims of the other and they are both totally convinced that they are victims of the other so when you see it, then you can point out certain things, write, speak to people have a website that says the truth about such and such, so and so and just state the facts as they are this is how it is if you want to, you can stand at a street corner and hold up something, a sign a few people may start talking to you they are more likely to listen if you are not angry, but simply explain look, this is how it is they are more likely to watch your website if it doesn't have the screaming anger about it you are not convincing anybody who has the opposite view to yours who says Bush is the greatest leader that has happened to America in a long time

you are not going to convince them with your anger that you are right their own position will become more entrenched and so if you are right then state the facts this is how it is explain if you can see the futility of anger it is more likely to drop away and there is something more powerful then you can speak with passion without anger, but passion about what you feel is true be aware, very careful with identifying with mental positions when you do that identifying with a position that is me or us against be very careful with making wrong others, groups of people or individuals because it draws you back into unconsciousness don't personalize it in that way when doing projects of any sort, large or small I find I must keep my intent fiercely in mind or I end up doing something else by employing this fierce focus am I actually being counterproductive in the long run or in the big picture the focus when you have a project that needs to be done finished now the questioner is saying keeping my intent fiercely in mind now the intent I assume is where you want to get to the finished project the point that you want to arrive at to get it done, so my intent is getting to that point where the project is finished my intent is drawing up a plan a business plan the architect of the building draws up a huge high rise office building or whatever, or maybe a project of any kind that you need to finish there's the intent and that's very much compared to a journey when you're traveling from here to there maybe you're walking let's say the rudimentary form, the early form of journeying of being on a pilgrimage or journeying tourists didn't exist at that time it was unknown people would journey because they had to leave their country or they went on some kind of army expedition or pilgrimage, spiritual journey that was perhaps the most common journey that individuals would undertake pilgrimage you know where you need to go the question is what is it that takes up most of your attention the place that you need to get to or the step you're taking at this moment what's more important now in many cases these days what people are obsessed with is the outcome where they need to get to that causes the stress, I need to get this done finished, over with and I'm on a limited time scale here I can't waste any minute it needs to get done so there's an excessive projection to the finished end product the point in the future that I need to get to and then the doing itself it is done in a hurried way there's the energy ok, come on, what's the next it doesn't matter what you're doing let's say you have to complete something that you manufacture with your hands but this thing has to be ready by tomorrow the world is mad these days you have no time, you have to do it by tomorrow and so you become excessively focused on tomorrow I have to get the finished product or you're thinking that I can sell this when it's finished I can sell it so it's done quickly with the end in mind the end takes over your mind occupies your mind more than the present moment and you reduce the present moment to a means to an end that's how a lot of doing happens these days and all that doing is of low quality any doing that reduces this moment to a means to an end to a future moment is not high quality doing and you can observe that when you observe how a person works whether they are totally attentive give total attention to whatever they are doing at this moment which does not mean that they don't know where they are going to in their project that is peripherally in their field of attention the point they want to get to is peripherally in their field of attention like a

traveler who is walking towards Rome let's say and they are taking this step and are fully conscious of each step they are taking but peripherally they know where they are going it's over there, it's a long way away but they know it's over there so the focal point is the quality of your step at this moment because if you are not careful you will stumble you will never get to Rome the quality of each step is what matters and the getting is secondary it is on the periphery, you have the goal in mind also but it does not occupy your mind it does not overpower you and so then the present moment is not a means to an end you give your full attention to this moment I have seen a few, not many and some of them are highly so called effective and successful people who did not become successful through strain and stress some did and they are very unhappy and won't be around for long but I have observed a few whoever they meet, whoever they talk to or whatever is presented to them they are totally there with it if you come to them and ask them a question they may be high up so to speak in social terms, the CEO of this or that corporation and somebody comes to them and there are a few, not many who will give you total attention no matter who you are and that is wonderful everybody loves doing what they tell them to do because they feel so valued because attention is the greatest gift you can give full attention you are acknowledging that human being beyond the roles that they play in the world so they are giving everything their fullest attention and they are extremely effective at what they do others look as if they were effective but everything they do is contaminated with extremely stressful raw energy that is really a form of suffering and they spread unhappiness so it is possible to work effectively in fact more effectively by focusing on what it is at hand here, right now, to do without losing in your peripheral vision the place you need to get to that remains here, there one step, Rome is there but this step is here and this step is more important whenever you see any work of quality that has been made by a human being it means some attention must have gone into it some human attention somewhere there must have been someone who did not reduce the moment in which that was being made to a means to an end so you have works of art that have that quality handicrafts, things made by artisans in the original way, not under stress of having to produce because attention is also loving care another aspect of attention is whatever you give attention to, there is a loving care that flows into the doing so if you give attention to a human being that comes into the now, the field of now and this is so beautiful to give each human being that comes into your field of vision to you with this or that demand or question or whatever it may be give them full and complete attention that doesn't mean you get drawn into their story, you don't give attention necessarily to their mind stream and energize that you simply give attention there is a spaciousness there is the awareness, the current of awareness flows into the, in the same way you look at a tree you hold, and that is beautiful so see how things work in that new way and observe if you can find anybody who is present in doing something, observe them it's wonderful to watch somebody at work in that way and it won't really be perceived as work by them, it's joyful this is one question that has appeared about 10 times in different forms how would you suggest imparting these teachings to children I assume that either you live with children or that you work with

children or that you may have the desire perhaps to write a book for children whatever, if you live with children or work with children, then of course primary in imparting the teachings to children is not through words, but through living living the teaching especially applies if you have children at home if you live presence if you embody living presence then they will catch it from you and you don't need to say that much but there may be moments when they are receptive and perhaps a word or two may come out of your mouth pointing to presence because the children live in a culture that knows as yet nothing of presence it is most likely that they go to a school that is dominated by nervous mind energy unless you have chosen already a relatively conscious school for them they do exist here and there but if not, if they are still part of the mainstream culture then in a way you need to counteract that at home otherwise they will be very nervous children because school is making them tense stressed and nervous so most homes lack presence and when you go in there you see in many cases it is a madhouse it is your job to bring in presence and again we come back now to what we just spoke of in the previous question giving your children your fullest attention is the greatest gift many parents these days never listen to their children because it is the next thing already that they need to do and they are busy anyway how was school, ok, ok and what do you have to do now, ok never, when in the listening it doesn't matter so much what the children are telling you what matters is the space that arises as you listen the spacious presence that arises as you listen to the child giving them space to be that's how the teachings are imparted by living it in that way perhaps also certain things if you have very young children where the mind is just starting up in them to see if you can keep them aware that words and concepts are never the reality are not everything particularly at a stage when they demand to be fed with words and concepts when they are at the age where they ask what's this, what's that for, what's that and a hundred times a day they ask what's that, because there quickly the mind is absorbing it needs to do that it seems the mind is absorbing words, it wants to know but the openness also disappears so when you teach new words or show them this is that, what's this there's so much you can say about this leaf to a child, instead of saying it's a leaf, as you say it you put it in the child's hand you encourage the child to look so that the child does not stop looking the moment he or she has learned the word because that's what the mind does, the true looking isn't happening anymore the word takes the place of the reality it becomes immediately a screen and so that to reduce that when you explain as much as you can you may not be able to do it all the time but when you explain something, stay with the reality and perhaps instead of saying it's a leaf, you say we call it a leaf because it's not a leaf this is the illusion that when you attach a word to something you know what it is you have no idea what it is you've just attached a word to it and that's how people live they live in this make-believe world that they know all they have is a collection of labels and so that that doesn't happen to the child as you teach language and words and concepts see if you can keep the child in touch with the reality that is more alive deeper, more mysterious than any concept and here you can teach so much you can teach the child, can you see the colors can you see the shadings here isn't it

beautiful can you feel that yes, it's called a leaf, but can you feel it can you see the colors and do you know what's happening to it no, why is it so beautiful, what's happening to it it's dying it's dying, soon it'll be gone and then the child may ask another dying, what's that well, I'm not saying what words will come out of your mouth because you will be present at that moment but then through this little thing where before you said that's a leaf or you might even know what tree it is so you have attached another label to it so you can give labels, the mind needs it but there's far more always remind the child and point out that which is beyond the words and concepts and so that would be wonderful for a child to grow up in that way so that the mind is not totally possessed by words and concepts so it remains, the seeing remains, the hearing remains you hear a bird and then encourage the child to hear more to hear, can you hear encourage, and children will be receptive to that of course there are many things in our culture that are there to stimulate the mind, to draw them out of their body to teach a child to feel the body they are very ready to feel that make it into a little game can you feel the inner body can you feel the aliveness that's there and they can, and they will love it and then if possible reduce the amount of gadgets they play with because they are all work on the level of abstraction computer screens, video game screens TV pulling them out of their body pulling their attention out into some hypnotic trance that gives them a secondary feeling of false aliveness the video game so much so that when they stop playing they don't feel alive anymore I need some other fix now this is what the culture is doing to the children I need another stimulus, another fix otherwise I will feel dead and then they look for the next thing and there's plenty of things switch something on, put headphones on and then you teach the children about the pain body children have them too some more than others so when the child goes into a rage or a screaming fit or maybe the pain body will take a different form the child totally withdraws into a corner and doesn't want to talk anymore the slightest thing might provoke the pain body it's the same with adults and there's then far more pain than you could ever have imagined coming out of that little situation some children become screaming monsters for a few minutes in the middle of it you can't say anything but when it's subsided you can say, what was that? where did that come from?

what did that feel like? does it feel good? and so you can direct attention within when the pain body is not active and then say, do you think it may happen again?

so we will see if it happens again and we can catch it when it starts and next time you can see the child starts, is it back? maybe it has a name the red big monster back? oh, can you feel it?

at that point whether they say they can feel it or not depends to what extent the pain body has already taken possession of their mind if they scream at you when you ask can you feel it? then it's too late to feel it or they throw something and then again afterwards you say, what was that? it was back, wasn't it?

and then you say, did you notice that mommy or daddy also has that? do you remember the other day when mommy screamed at you? or mommy dropped something and started shouting and screaming at daddy threw him out of the house that was the same thing mommy didn't catch it then either and so how wonderful if a child can grow up in a conscious environment, family surroundings that way not necessarily totally enlightened just conscious not necessarily a family with continuous and permanent peace throughout so that is imparting the teaching to children present moment, direct their attention redirect their attention to present moment, again and again to looking, to listening, to touching away from how you reduce the amount they spend addicted to the screens and electronic things you have to somehow do it and replace it with something more vital, more alive and they can feel that it's more vital and more alive pain bodies have an enormous capacity to pull you in even the pain body of a child has that already when it starts screaming it wants a negative reaction from you that's what the pain body always wants give me more pain and so it requires considerable presence to hold the space and many parents are completely flabbergasted when the children, the angel turns into a monster what is going on here and then they react the more unconscious they are, the stronger the more violent their reaction will be their own pain body reacts they know not what they do there are several questions there's just one here and about 6 or 7 others on prayer the use of prayer how to use it, whether to use it at all now that word can mean many different things it can mean going to church and saying please God let me have that job I promise I'll be good if you only let me have that job I practiced that as a child please let there be some peace in my family didn't work so from somebody who went to church every Sunday then at 12 I must have decided that there was no point anymore but there are many different kinds of prayer there are petitionary prayers you would like something they may sometimes work but you never know whether it was a prayer or you would have gotten it anyway there are more effective ways if you really feel that you need or want something but be careful, it won't make you happy but that's another story if you really feel you want something you can use affirmation and visualization and when you get it, enjoy it don't look for yourself in it don't look to it for deep inner fulfillment or some kind of permanently enhanced sense of self or permanent happiness nothing that you achieve can give you that knowing that, you can play around with the world of form and Jesus already explained how to pray for something and that is when he said when you pray for something, feel as if you already had it as if it had already been given so you're not saying, I want something because if you say, I want something it affirms a lack it says on the other side, the unexpressed side I don't have it so when you say, I want it you're also stating that you don't have it so you're praying at the same time not to have it if you affirm and visualize that it is already here and you feel as if you had it that the feeling that you want to get from it you already have that feeling, and that's the truth because you're imagining that it's going to give you feelings of peace or happiness which is always in you already if you just go inside deep enough but I don't want to discourage you from playing around in the world of form so why not try it out visualize that it is already yours you have it and you feel what you feel as you

have it thank you for giving me that it's beautiful, whatever it may be the house, you're already in it feels good, thank you it's nice to have that house it's already there it's more likely to manifest in that way and then you move in and you go from there, and you sit there you feel, oh great, I've got it and then the old mind patterns come up in the new house then there are other prayers that are used in different religions and they can be called pointers they are more advanced prayers they are pointers to a particular state it's not that uttering those words produces magically the state what matters when you utter certain words or prayers and most of them are short is really the stillness that comes after that Buddhism, for example, has the metta meditation which is a kind of prayer which starts with I believe may everybody on this planet be well and happy and then after you've uttered those words there's a stillness and then it says may everybody in this country be well and happy metta means loving kindness and then there's a stillness may every being in this city be well and happy stillness may everybody in this house be well and happy may I be well and happy and it takes you into stillness and the being of well and happy is already there in the stillness it's there, it spreads you could become still it would spread anyway even without the words because whatever state of consciousness you are in affects the totality and in turn is the totality manifesting through you we have the beautiful Christian prayer by Saint Francis, I believe let me be an instrument of thy peace where there is hatred let me sow love and so on, where there is injury pardon, and so on and those prayers are openings, they open a door and they always take you into stillness and they are beautiful most prayers operate still on the level of duality even when you say let me be an instrument of thy peace you are still using the language of duality there's me and thy presumably is God there is me and there is God so God is perceived still as something or someone separate from me nevertheless, it's a beautiful prayer and if stillness follows the prayer in the stillness you have transcended duality there is some of you are familiar with the course in miracles many of those lessons are a kind of prayer and most of the lessons in it operate on the level of duality speaking of God as He and addressing God as something or someone outside of you course in miracles meets you where you are on the level of duality but as you reach the end of the course without you noticing it the lessons become more non-dualistic and in the end you end up in stillness and it says the use for words is almost over now towards the end of the course so it meets you where you are and takes you by the hand it only works if you can get hold if Christian terminology is appealing to you to some it is not and then there are many other ways to use something that you don't like the form of which you don't like so most prayers are dualistic and then you can have although the meta prayer in Buddhism is may all beings be well and happy duality is fine, there is no duality really there although you are still saying there are many beings ultimately there is only oneness but what can you do, you are using language and then there are short things that are almost like mantras just single words peace for example the word itself doesn't produce peace but it is a pointer, stillness one of the most beautiful pointers to be found in the Old Testament be still and know that I am God and this is why if we can call that a prayer it is a kind of prayer it is a prayer where duality is

transcended and it is a miraculous prayer the words of which it consists are all synonyms for one single thing be still know I am God be being one being sat in Sanskrit being and stillness are one it is the stillness of being itself before it comes into existence as something be still, know in the stillness that is being there is a deep knowing non-conceptual a deep intelligence not words, not thoughts deeper than thought because it is the primordial seed of all intelligence be still, know I am, it is the innermost sense of beingness or I am God, the divine, the source, the one and you put these words together each word signifies also the other they are all one be still, know, I am God miraculous so those are advanced prayers and powerful they put you in touch be still and know that I am God is one of the most powerful and beautiful pointers to the truth and one of those rare ones that uses language without taking you into duality please talk more about the pain body and how to transcend it we already spoke a little bit but there are so many questions about the pain body that we may in tomorrow's session talk a little bit more about it unless something else arises in the now last one perhaps because they are cutting off the satellite dish as someone who has done a lot of yoga and body work for many years I always felt there was some correlation between spirituality and good posture then I saw you what a shock well my first thought was how can somebody with your posture be so blooming spiritually and wouldn't you be even more spiritual if you did some corrective body work my second thought was that I am a blooming idiot can you tell us how you experience the body and if it ever feels like an impediment to you that reminds me of I talked to Gangaji the spiritual teacher a couple of years ago and she was telling me she was doing some kind of body work years ago I can't remember what kind but at that time she heard of Ramana Maharshi and became interested in the teachings and read a book and then she saw a photo of him and she saw that and said a man with such bad posture can possibly have nothing to teach me he will certainly have nothing to teach me if he walks like that and it took her several years to transcend that belief and then she saw that it didn't matter anymore sometimes if the body has gone through a lot of suffering either physical suffering or psychological suffering it leaves traces in the body in the very bones of the body it leaves traces in some cases it's in the face I knew one spiritual teacher I won't say who who said look at my face I always look unhappy even when I'm happy I look unhappy and that is because I've been unhappy I was unhappy for so many years he didn't really, he only looked unhappy if you saw the external features of his face if you looked more deeply you could see he wasn't unhappy but you could see the lines in his face that showed, that were the traces left behind by unhappiness but something else was now shining through it through the form that had been affected by the suffering and that's the same here people are surprised when I tell them it's very rare that I ever feel any pain in the body only two years ago I was at Omega I had a back pain I don't know what that was to do with maybe the events in New York I don't know, but usually there's no pain, the body feels fine and it doesn't seem to be a problem at all and something else shines through it so the body has fulfilled its function of being an opening for that now I'm not saying that in many other cases body work is a wonderful thing to free emotions that may be stuck there even the pain body

it's beautiful it's not, ultimately it could happen to anyone at any moment it could happen to somebody who is totally crippled and that has happened too there was a famous enlightened poet a teacher who hundreds of years ago wrote the Indian scripture called the Ashtavakra Gita and he is said to have been a cripple and it didn't matter anymore that was his suffering traces left behind by the suffering and then the body simply became something through which presence shines I'll put these back in the basket I'm sorry, your question hasn't come up yet there are many thank you, thank you stay a little while both here and if you are still there Austin, Hollyhock stay a little while with the empty chair or the empty screen thank you